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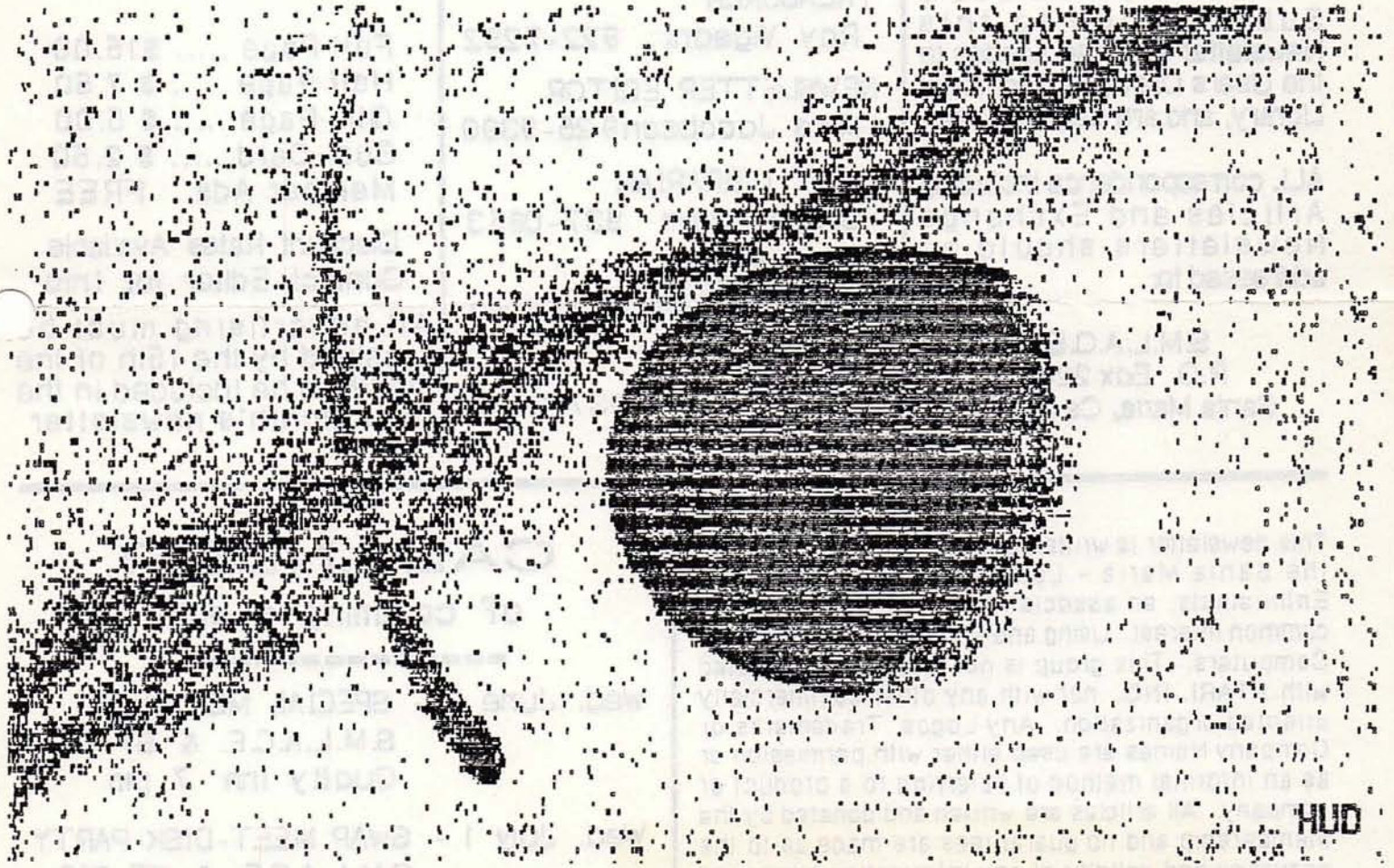
June 1987

SANTA MARIA / LOMPOC ATARI COMPUTER ENTHUSIASTS

It'll be out of this world



Bring a friend and Come

Wed. June 3rd 7 pm

Orcutt Room at the Quality Inn

Broadway and Stowell Santa Maria

The SANTA MARIA LOMPOC ATARI COMPUTER ENTHUSIASTS is an Independent ATARI Computer Users Group.

Meetings are held the First Wednesday of Each Month at the Oak Knoll Bowl in Santa Maria, at 7:00 p.m.

Memberships include a Subscription to this Newsletter and free access to the Users Disk and Technical Library, and are $20.00 / year

ALL correspondence including Articles and Exchange Newsletters should be addressed to:

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CALANDER

of comming events

Wed. June 3 - SPECIAL MEETING
S.M.L.A.C.E. & ST SIG
Quality Inn 7 pm

Wed. July 1 - SWAP MEET-DISK PARTY
S.M.L.A.C.E. & ST SIG
Oak Knoll Bowl 7 pm

Wed. Aug 5 - S.M.L.A.C.E. Meeting
Oak Knoll Bowl 7 pm

August ST SIG Meeting Time and Location to be Announced

PREZ SEZ

by Gerry Stotts

This is it!

This is the month you have been waiting for! Disk Publications Inc. will be showing "THE NEW ALADDIN" for us this month!!! If you don't make it to this meeting, shame on you.

These people are sending a representative all the way from Texas to be here and show us the new magazine on a disk. Don't make excuses. They will not be back again and this is your ONE chance to see this from the people that put this publication out.

If you want a store demo from an "expert" (K-MART, TOY 'R' US etc.) go ahead and don't support this club. But don't ask me "why don't we have more guest speakers".

If you have a friend with an Atari that is not a member of the club, bring him/her along! We welcome anyone to this meeting.

Don't forget, it doesn't matter if you have an ST or one of the 8 bit computers. This meeting is for BOTH 8 and 16 bit. We will NOT have a separate ST SIG this month. This meeting will take the place of the SIG.

This magazine is NOT like the disk you get with the ANALOG or ANTIC magazine. This disk IS the magazine! It is interactive. It has stories that change each time you read them.

I can't do a review on this magazine yet because I have not seen one myself! But trust me, this has something for just about everyone! See ALL OF YOU at the June 3rd meeting at the QUALITY INN (old Vandenberg Inn), 1316 South Broadway in Santa Maria (near the Wards shopping center). 7:00 pm in the "Orcutt" meeting room.

We will also have a large screen TV to view this on so everyone should be able to see.

Disk Publications will be giving away FREE SOFTWARE! We will have a member only raffle. We will also have our dollar raffle.

So come to see this new idea in a magazine and win, win, win!!! -Gerry-

Elections

by Gerry Stotts

We are coming up on election time again. As most of you know but probably don't remember, we are starting the election process in September with the new officers to take office concurrently with the old officers in November. That gives the new officers 2 months to become familiar with their positions before they must handle the job alone.

So start thinking of the person you would like to see in which office. I will not be running this time. I think the club is doing 'OK' but with a better president I think it could be doing great.

I am also getting burned out. I try to do big things for a SMALL club and I find that you don't seem to be interested. I don't get the support from YOU that I need. I must be doing something wrong. I hope you will elect a better president and give him/her better support. Thank you -Gerry-

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Jim Keenan

The General Meeting for May was held at Oak Knoll Bowl May 6, 1987 with 14 members present (of which five were officers).

Despite of the low turn out it was an interesting meeting. Steve Ramm opened the meeting, passing out the ballots for "Name Your NEWSLETTER" contest.

Steve announced that the Library now has 85 double sided disk inventory and the new Librarian Phil Pacheco has published a ninety page library catalogue which is for sale for $7.00 ($4.00 on disk).

Steve gave a 'demo' on Paper Clip and recommended it highly especially the instruction manual, compared to Atari Writer Plus.

Pat Signs gave a demo on two games "HARDBALL" and "FOOTBALL".

The ballots were counted for name the NEWSLETTER, with the following results:

SMLACE INTERFACE	5
THE DIP SWITCH	3
BACKSPACE	2
HACKER NEWSPRESS	1
COMPUCIOUS	1
SMLACE LOCAL BUGS	1
SMLACE EXPERIENCE	1

It was decided due to the lack of attendance at the May meeting the ballots would be re-issued at the next General Meeting.

There was no member attendance prize, the raffle was won by Bill Bohlen who selected "KORNIS RIFT".

The Paper Library

by Ray Vigeant

Several months ago, I undertook what I thought would be a relatively small project.

I wanted to compile a list of all the hardware modifications which were documented in the SMLACE paper library. The next thing that happened was I had the entire library, six cardboard boxes full of newsletters and magazines, sitting on the floor.

Some of the boxes were ready to be retired but for the most part their contents showed some organization. There obviously was an awful lot of unused information contained in all this which very few members were using, myself included.

Since there was so much to go through, I decided to keep a list of the titles and dates of the different newsletters and magazines, cull out the duplicate items and lastly note any hardware modifications. This task is almost complete. Within the next month or two, I will be able to publish a general directory of the paper library along with a list of the hardware modifications which are available.

The following is a partial list of the types of information which are available in the library.

To begin, there is a DEMOPAC published by ATARI which is ideal for beginners. This DEMOPAC consists of tutorials in the different capabilities of the ATARI computer (graphics, string manipulation, timers, programming examples ..etc.).

While some of this type of information might seem dated, it is still applicable to all of the 8-bit computers.

In the library are about four years worth of ANTIC magazines ready to be checked out. Speaking of checking out material, the loan time is one month from the time the material is picked up.

Lastly, the biggest part of the library are the exchanged newsletters. The newsletters contain member reviews of some of the more popular software. In most cases they document the strengths and weaknesses of the program.

A sampling of the reviews include: Atariwriter Plus, Paperclip, Print Shop, Synfile, Syncalc, Letter Perfect, Data Perfect, Speedscript, Speedcalc, Basic XL/XE, Turbo Basic, Logo, Forth, Deep Blue C, Mac 65, Action..

Hardware reviews include: printers, monitors, modems, interfaces, add-on-boards.

This library isn't just limited to the 8-bit machines, the amount of ST related articles and reviews is growing with each newsletter that we receive.

All of this information is quietly sitting in the club's new file cabinet, ready to be used in a moments notice.

This resource is of value only if it is used. It is available to all members and maybe, just maybe, it may hold the answers to some of your computing questions.

This Space
Reserved
Member Want Ads
Free

Swap Meet

by Gerry Stotts

The August meeting will be our annual swap meet. I hope you will bring something to the meeting to swap or sell! In the past two years we have raffled off a 130XE computer.

Last year we make a lot of money, thanks to all of you that sold tickets. I was hoping to raffle off an ST this year. We are out of time and some of the plans I hoped to come through didn't. This is not MY loss. It is YOURS.

As a parting (see "Elections" elsewhere) gesture, I have asked the San Luis club (SLOPOKES) to join with us in a raffle for the Christmas season. This would be for an ST computer. If you would like to see this happen, say s to an officer. We will again need your support to sell tickets. I hope to make this a really good money maker for the club and make someone very happy about his/her new computer!

If you don't want to do this then now is the time to say so. I will probably know in June if the SLOPOKES will be willing to go in with us on the raffle or not. -Gerry-

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WANTED
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We carry a complete line of ATARI products and have a large public domain library. Write or call for free catalogue. (408) 749-1003 TUE - FRI 10AM - 6 PM

What's in it for me?

by Gerry Stotts

What does this club offer you? It offers a lot, considering what you put into it. For most of you that is nothing except attending the meetings.

The officers of this club try to do a good job for you. Most of the time that job is not even paid with a "thank you".

Some of the things available to you are: A disk library with about 85 disks with both sides filled. These are free if you bring your own disks to the special meetings for copying. We have a catalog of the library available for $7.00 paper or $4.00 disk. We are working on the ST library. It currently contains 21 disks.

The club sells DSDD (double sided/double density) 5 1/4 inch disks for $.50 each (10 to a box) with hub rings, write protect tabs, and labels. You can get them cheaper if you buy in large quantities mail order, but we encourage you to support your club. And you have somewhere to get a new disk if there is a problem with formatting one.

For the ST we also have 3 1/2 inch disks with labels for $1.25 each. This price will probably go down if any of you support the club and start buying them from us. We are selling them at our cost and are not making anything at $1.25 each. However, the cost could go down to $1.00 each and we could still make a few cents if you support your local club and get them from us.

Most months there is a DOM (disk of the month) available to you for $2.00. These are packed full of games, utilities, and demo's (pictures/music) on both sides of the disk. Some months we have an ST DOM also but we have not seen much interest in this yet. No interest: no DOM...

We also have a technical library with magazines and books. We receive a large number of newsletters each month also. These are available from Ray Vigeant (our Treasurer) at the present time. Ray has sorted them and done a lot of work. There are so many good articles on software and hardware, modifications etc., etc. in these newsletters it would take a book to cover it all.

We are also authorized to sell MYDOS. We have the current version for sale. If you would like your own LEGAL copy of this great Disk Operating System, see Ray Vigeant (we haven't really advertised this and I don't think we have sold any yet). This is far superior to DOS 2.0 or 2.5 and has RAMDISK support.

We have TURBO BASIC for sale also. This is a much improved BASIC programming language for the XL/XE ONLY (takes 64K). It includes a compiler also to really speed things up!

We also try to have an interesting meeting for you to attend. We offer raffles (free member only, and $1.00 ticket for everyone).

We have a video tape for the novice ST owner that we rent also. If I left anything or anyone out, I am sorry.

In case you are a newer member and don't really know what is available, I thought you would find some surprises. If you can think of something else you would like this club to provide, let us know (any officer). We aim to please... -Gerry-

vp says

by Steve Ramm

Here's another stumbling block for beginners: Keyboard Interrupts.

We tend to organize things as we see them visually. For instance, if you're looking for a particular program, do you read all the labels or do you remember what the disk looks like and look for it on that basis? This is one reason why most of my labels are handwritten. They would be a lot neater and a lot more uniform if they printed, but my handwriting is not consistent; sometimes the letters are big, sometimes little, sometimes streched out, sometimes crowded; so each label has its own graphic image.

Without having to take the time to read a label, I look for the graphic shape I remember. This can get one into a lot of trouble with a computer. What you see graphically on the screen is not what it seems to be; it is what the computer decides to show you.

Now this may seem perfectly confusing to you (huh, I say, huh) and of course, if you're not confused, maybe you don't understand the problem.

It doesn't help to know that the computer can do something one of 10 different ways, all with the same result. My wife first ran into this problem with a word processor. She would format everything very nicely on the screen, but when she printed it out, nothing printed the way she wanted it to. A word processor is probably one of the worst offenders for defying logic and graphic organization.

For instance: In BASIC, if you hit CTRL-comma you get a heart on the screen, in a word processor anything can happen depending on which word processor you have. So all the key that you have learned to trust and respect are strangers in a word processor program. In BASIC, not only do all keys work, but what you see is what you get on the screen. Not so in a word processor.

It's more than just 40 characters per line versus 80, it's printer codes and formatting information and program features. Try scrolling backwards through a BASIC program listing or moving the cursor around like you would in a word processor program.

I know that I've singled out word processors and I've done so because this type of program is very popular and they rely heavily on keyboard interrupts to implement their features. I sat down with my wife and explained to her a little bit of how a computer was organized, how a word processor was put together and after a while she learned to not let her eyes trick her and she is now able to fluently organized data in a text file so it prints the way she wants it.

So much for openers. After all this the actual explanation is short and probably a disappointment after such a buildup.

The keyboard is considered a separate external device to the computer. It was designed this way on purpose for flexibility. There are some computers where this wasn't done and they are a royal pain to program with.

Imagine someone walking up to your computer in the middle of a game, pressing any key, and the program crashes or you succeed in locking out the keyboard and you have to reboot to get back in. These are not necessarily actual examples but represent the kind of things that can happen and that we take for granted as not happening on an Atari.

With all external devices, all information coming from them is first stored in a buffer. It is this buffer that the computer accesses to do whatever it does with this incoming data.

Incidently, it works the same way going out. All information is deposited by the computer in a buffer and then the actual output routine transfers the info t wherever. Normally all this happens automatically and one is never aware of the stepped progress of the data.

However an astute programmer can step in at certain points and re-direct the flow of data into an area of his program that he controls.

Normally after a key stroke is inputted into the computer it is handled and examined by the computer operating system and placed in screen memory (outputted to the S: or E:) and shows up on the screen.

This is what troubled my wife at first. She thought that the screen was merely a dumb reflection of th keyboard, much like a piec of paper in a typewriter. Graphically she was sitting at her typewriter: hit the key, hear the click, see the letter appear.

But that keystroke doesn't have to go to the screen. It can go anywhere. With a word processor it goes to a text buffer string. What you see on the screen is not a dumb reflection of your typing, but a window of the text string in memory.

Normally you see the end of the string as you are creating it, but not necessarily. The word processor program interrupts the flow of keystrokes to the buffer and checks for certain key combinations. I it finds for instance control "B" it does not print the key combination to the text buffer (in this example

a heavy vertical line down the right of the character space) but it branches to a routine in the program.

If control-B means to set the bottom margin in your program then it will print (through the use of a redefined character set) an inverse B (as in Atariwriter). When the text is being sent to the printer, the character is read and instead of sending the character to the printer, printer codes are sent as appropriate.

Normally a character is associated with one keystroke(s). In the above example CNTRL-B is a vertical line that is redefined as an inverse B followed by numbers. In Atariwriter if you used the inverse key and typed a B it would show up on the screen as an inverse B and the B would be underlined when printed.

If that seems confusing bear in mind that visually when you looked at the text file you could tell when the bottom margin was being redefined and when a letter(s) was being underlined.

If you examined the text file on disk with a disk analyzer you would see two different numbers that would both be represented by the same visual character on screen with Atariwriter.

If you quickly want to see this, go to DOS and copy the file to the S: or E: device. Depending you your DOS you'll get different results depending on what device you use. Some DOS's will screen out certain characters and not print them to the screen or will print them to E: but not to S: or vice versa.

Paperclip gets even more complicated. Not only are we dealing with a redefined character set, but also with two stage commands whose final character is different from anything you typed in.

For instance, to underline in Atariwriter, you type everything in inverse. With Paperclip, you type CTRL-U, you are then prompted for start or end underlining.

Start underlining is represented by a small underlined "s" on screen; end by a small "e" underlined. The letters in between are normal.

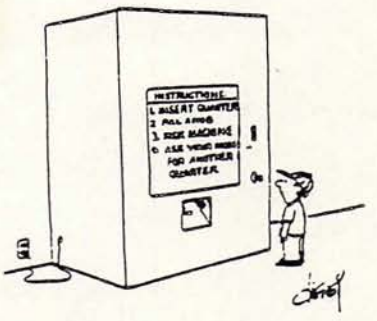
If you examine the text file using the previously mentioned methods you will find that the "s" underlined is represented by the character created normally with a CTRL-U (a heavy horizontal block) and "e" underlined is represented by the character created normally with a CTRL-comma (a heart).

In Paperclip, when you use the Find or Substitution feature, you bypass some of the character re-directions. If you wish to find or change the character the means start underlining, you type CTRL-U and the small "s" underlined character appears on your prompt line. However, back in the main text, a CTRL-U will give you the prompt "S or E" and then print the corresponding character as you choose. Paperclip gives you a list of control code equates so you can type in directly certain codes when in the Find or Substitution feature.

Most programs don't go to these extremes but many programs make use of redefined characters and and redefine keyboard inputs as necessary.

One term that you commonly hear of is a "wedge" program. The easiest place to stick a wedge program in is a keyboard interrupt. When certain key combinations are pushed the main program, instead of simply processing the keystroke, will instead branch to the wedge program, execute the code, and then come back and continue on. This is one way that extra features can be added to an existing program.

An autorun.sys file will set up a keyboard interrupt that will screen all keystrokes. Unaffected keystrokes will simply continue on while certain keystrokes will cause the wedge to be utilized before returning control to the main program.



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